

## Best Buddies Builds Friendships for Students with Special Needs

People with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from society because of their differences. Best Buddies is the world's biggest non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships. The organization is determined to end social isolation for people with intellectual disabilities by establishing meaningful, lasting relationships with their non-disabled peers. These friendships help to increase self-esteem, confidence and the abilities of all involved.

Best Buddies was born when founder Anthony K. Shriver recognized that people with intellectual disabilities lacked opportunities to socialize with their non-disabled peers. Believing that friendship is key to building the self-esteem essential to a happy and productive life, Anthony incorporated Best Buddies as a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization in 1989. Best Buddies Indiana, a state affiliate of Best Buddies International, was established in Indiana in 2002 and currently serves over 1,300 individuals statewide through its friendship programs for teens and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Currently, 20 high schools in Indiana offer the Best Buddies High School program, which pairs students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities in one-to-one friendships with their non-disabled peers. Best Buddies envisions a world where people with intellectual disabilities are recognized for their abilities, embraced by society, and valued in the workplace. If you are interested in starting a Best Buddies program at your high school, please contact Lizette Baumann, Best Buddies Indiana High School Program Manager at [lizettebaumann@bestbuddies.org](mailto:lizettebaumann@bestbuddies.org) or (317) 920-8622. For more information, please visit [www.bestbuddiesindiana.org](http://www.bestbuddiesindiana.org).